**Module 7: Anxiety Disorders**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**7.1. Clinical Presentation**

* Describe how generalized anxiety disorder presents.
* Describe how specific phobia presents.
* Describe how agoraphobia presents.
* Describe how social anxiety disorder presents.
* Describe how panic disorder presents.

**7.2. Epidemiology**

* Describe the epidemiology of generalized anxiety disorder.
* Describe the epidemiology of specific phobia.
* Describe the epidemiology of agoraphobia.
* Describe the epidemiology of social anxiety disorder.
* Describe the epidemiology of panic disorder.

**7.3. Comorbidity**

* Describe the comorbidity of generalized anxiety disorder.
* Describe the comorbidity of specific phobia.
* Describe the comorbidity of agoraphobia.
* Describe the comorbidity of social anxiety disorder.
* Describe the comorbidity of panic disorder.

**7.4. Etiology**

* Describe the biological causes of anxiety disorders.
* Describe the psychological causes of anxiety disorders.
* Describe the sociocultural causes of anxiety disorders.

**7.5. Treatment**

* Describe treatment options for generalized anxiety disorder.
* Describe treatment options for specific phobia.
* Describe treatment options for agoraphobia.
* Describe treatment options for social anxiety disorder.
* Describe treatment options for panic disorder.

KEY TERMS

**Agoraphobia**: Intense fear or anxiety triggered by specific situations like using public transportation, being in open or enclosed spaces, crowds, or being outside of the home alone, often leading to avoidance behaviors.

**Amygdala**: A brain structure responsible for storing memories related to emotional events and initiating reactions to fearful situations.

**Biofeedback**: A technique providing a visual representation of a patient’s physiological arousal, helping them become more skilled at voluntarily reducing their physiological arousal.

**Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**: A combination of cognitive and behavioral strategies aimed at identifying and restructuring maladaptive thoughts, providing opportunities to utilize these more effective thought patterns through exposure-based experiences.

**Cognitive restructuring**: Part of CBT, involving the identification and restructuring of maladaptive thoughts.

**Corticostriatal-Thalamocortical (CSTC) Circuit**: Implicated in panic disorder, involving complex pathways and multiple neuroanatomical structures that mediate the body's response to fear.

**Electroencephalography (EEG)**: Measures neurofeedback or brain activity as part of biofeedback techniques.

**Electromyography (EMG)**: Measures the amount of muscle activity currently experienced by an individual as part of biofeedback techniques.

**Emotion-Focused Coping**: A coping strategy focusing on managing emotional responses to stress rather than directly addressing the problem.

**Exposure Treatment**: Involves exposing individuals to their feared stimuli, used in treating phobias and other anxiety disorders.

**Flooding**: An exposure technique that repeatedly exposes the individual to their most feared object or situation without utilizing a fear hierarchy.

**Galvanic Skin Response (GSR)**: Measures sweat as part of biofeedback techniques.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder**: Characterized by excessive anxiety and worry about a wide range of events or activities, impacting daily social and occupational tasks.

**Heart-Rate Variability (HRV)**: Measures autonomic activity such as heart rate or blood pressure as part of biofeedback techniques.

**Hippocampus**: Involved in processing emotional responses and determining the reality of perceived threats.

**Imaginal Exposure**: A technique where the presentation of the feared object/situation is imagined rather than in person.

**In Vivo Exposure**: The presentation of the feared object/situation in person.

**Interoceptive Exposure**: Involves inducing panic-specific symptoms to the individual repeatedly to disconfirm maladaptive thoughts about the sensations.

**Locus Coeruleus**: Implicated in panic disorder, serving as an "on-off" switch for norepinephrine neurotransmitters.

**Maladaptive Assumptions**: Dysfunctional thought patterns observed in anxiety-related disorders, where individuals interpret events as dangerous.

**Modeling**: A behavioral explanation for the development of specific and social phobias, where an individual acquires fear through observation and imitation.

**Negative Appraisals**: Misinterpreting physiological sensations as catastrophic in anxiety disorders, particularly panic disorder.

**Panic Disorder**: Consists of recurrent unexpected panic attacks coupled with fear of future panic attacks.

**Prefrontal Cortex**: Plays a role in processing emotional responses and modulating fear responses.

**Problem-Focused Coping**: Involves directly addressing the problem causing distress.

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)**: Involves tensing and relaxing various large muscle groups throughout the body.

**Psychoeducation**: Educating the patient on the nature of panic disorder and the mechanisms that maintain the disorder.

**Rational-Emotive Therapy**: Focuses on identifying irrational self-defeating assumptions and replacing them with productive thoughts and feelings.

**Relaxation Training**: Teaching relaxation techniques to apply during the onset of panic attacks.

**Respondent Conditioning**: A behavioral concept explaining the development of phobias.

**Self-Monitoring**: The act of self-observation essential to the CBT treatment process for panic disorder.

**Serotonin Transporter Gene (5-HTTLPR):** Codes for the serotonin transporter protein, which regulates serotonin levels in the brain. Variations in this gene are linked to emotional and behavioral differences and susceptibility to psychiatric conditions like anxiety and depression.

**Social Anxiety Disorder**: Anxiety or fear related to social situations, especially where evaluation by others is possible.

**Social Skills Training**: Focuses on improving the patient’s social interactions that contribute to their negative social experiences and anxiety.

**Specific Phobia**: Distinguished by fear or anxiety specific to an object or a situation.

**Stimulus Generalization**: The tendency for a conditioned stimulus to evoke similar responses to other stimuli, leading to generalized anxiety disorder.

**Systematic desensitization**: An exposure technique that utilizes relaxation strategies to help calm the individual as they are presented with the fearful object.